

SOURCES OF LOVE AND HATE

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faeces and urine themselves), a dread which may lie behind a poor appetite; a refusal to try new foods, or a reluctance to accept food from certain people. (In an adult patient of my own, generally healthy but with a very poor appetite throughout childhood, these phantasies of being given bad food from his mother turned out to have been very strong indeed, mainly as a result of his own wish to attack his mother's breast by means of his urine, a wish in its turn arising from disappointed desire.)

In many children beyond the first year, the observable obstinacy with regard to the use of a vessel, or to defaecation itself, is by no means due to a simple wish to retain the faeces and please himself about parting with it. This simple attitude is probably not found after the first year, if even so late. Later than this, refusal to defaecate or difficulty in doing so into a vessel, is rather the outcome of actual dread of the bad faeces, of putting it into a clean pot, and even the feeling that one ought not to have such bad stuff inside one at all. The act of bringing it out is a confession that it is there (as well as an act of trust in the adult of which the child does not always feel capable). It seems better to try to deny that one has any bad stuff at all. Not seeing is not believing. And so the circle goes on—a painful condition of faeces, greater fear of them, more difficulty in voiding them, and so on—especially if the child is punished or heavily reproached and so made more guilty. He then becomes still more afraid, and so more hostile and unwilling.

It is thus clear that any marked or exaggerated development of dread or shame about excrement or the act of voiding, whether engendered by clumsy treatment or by

spontaneous
endo-psychic processes, sets up one of the
biggest obstacles
to training and to bodily hygiene in young
children.

I do not, of course, suggest that all cases of
constipation
in little children or adults are due solely to these
psychic
mechanisms. But there are very many cases
observable
where every known physiological factor can
be ruled out
as a primary cause, and where yet the difficulty
is very
troublesome and unyielding. Moreover, the
psycho-analysis
of normal and neurotic adults has shown that
these psycho-
logical attitudes occur in everyone, with of
course very varying
degrees and varying psychical context.